



WDA Testimony in Support of SB 97 Temporary Permits to Practice Dentistry and Dental Hygiene

**Dr. Gene Shoemaker, WDA Vice President
Assembly Health Committee Public Hearing
Tuesday, April 14, 2009 - 10:00 AM**

Good morning, Chair Erpenbach and members of the Senate Health Committee. My name is Dr. Gene Shoemaker. I am a general dentist who graduated with my doctorate in dentistry from Marquette University School of Dentistry in 1989 and, after successfully completing the written and clinical board exams I obtained a license to practice in Wisconsin. After practicing as an associate in both Oshkosh and Appleton, I purchased a practice in Waukesha in 1993. My business partner, Dr. Kate Gilson is also a Marquette dental school graduate and together we employ 11 people in our small business in downtown Waukesha.

I tell you this, because it emphasizes the unique nature of dentistry – that while a part of the regulated, health care-provider community, most dentists still own their practices and operate as small businesses; we do not shift costs of the underfunded Medicaid program and we do not operate under the type of nonprofit tax status so many larger hospital-based health care entities do. The small-business model is why so many Medicaid recipients often face problems accessing dental care: dentists have very limited ability to shift costs and, as a result, many of us limit our participation in Medicaid and/or we choose to actively provide charity care in other venues.

I personally provide charity dental care in my practice by treating patients referred through the WDA Foundation's Donated Dental Services program and St. Joseph Medical and Dental Clinic in Waukesha. In addition, I will be treating patients at the new low-income dental clinic established in Waukesha this past year.

I come before you today as vice president of the nearly 3,000-member Wisconsin Dental Association and as chair of the upcoming large-scale voluntary, charity-care program of the WDA and WDA Foundation called Mission of Mercy. Wisconsin's first Mission of Mercy (often referred to as "MOM" program) will take place in La Crosse the weekend of June 27-28, 2009. The MOM program is a free dental care event, which will help provide some short-term relief to a limited number of children and adults. We also hope it enables us to keep the discussion focused on more meaningful long-term solutions to Medicaid funding issues.

Goals of the first WDA MOM event include: (1) providing free access to dental care while placing a high priority on patients suffering from dental infections or pain, (2) raising public awareness of the increasing difficulty low-income adults and children face in accessing critical dental care and (3) challenging Medicaid patients, policy-makers and dental professionals to work together to reduce the disease burden and improve access to oral health of those who have been promised care by the state.

We anticipate nearly 1,000 volunteers (dentists, hygienists, assistants, lab techs, nurses, lay people, etc.) will provide care to approximately 1,200 patients during the 2-

day event. Patients will be seen on a first-come, first-served basis, beginning with a stop in dental triage area to make sure the most urgent needs are addressed as quickly as possible. While waiting for dental services, patients will watch oral health patient education videos and receive information on how they can help prevent future disease and infections by eating right and implementing good daily oral hygiene practices.

We expect the value of care volunteers will give away during this 2-day event to equal almost \$600,000. This is an extensive project to undertake from an administrative standpoint and it will require significant funding to bring to fruition. Actual hard costs of operating this program will be approximately \$135,000, but this figure does not include the in-kind administrative contributions from WDA staff, leaders and our WDA Foundation to scout facilities, recruit and coordinate food donations, coordinate equipment and supply rentals, draft patient care forms and obtain financial donations from individual dentists, dental-related companies and outside entities. Our goal is to raise the \$135,000 hard dollars that will be necessary to rent facilities, equipment, supplies and purchase food and other necessary items.

The Mission of Mercy event will rely completely on the volunteer services of dental care providers. In addition to my Wisconsin colleagues, the WDA has already been contacted by 10 to 15 providers from other states who routinely travel around the country to participate in MOM events; these dentists have indicated a willingness to come here to provide free care as part of our program.

Under current Wisconsin statutes, out-of-state dental providers are required to pay the full licensing fee and go through an extensive licensure process if they wish to volunteer for the WDA's Mission of Mercy event in June. In 2008, I had the opportunity to be of professional service at three MOM events in other states after being granted a temporary dental permit to practice dentistry in those states.

To tap into the professional generosity of out-of-state dental providers who have expressed interest in volunteering at our Mission of Mercy event, Sen. Vinehout and Rep. Shilling have drafted Senate Bill 97. This bill that creates a "no-fee" temporary permit for dental providers wanting to volunteer at dental charity care events, providing they meet all state dental licensing requirements other than the state jurisprudence exam. **I'm here today, on behalf of the WDA, to testify in strong support of SB 97.**

Anticipating our first MOM program to be a success, the WDA Board of Trustees and our WDA Foundation have decided to tentatively hold another MOM event in 2010 in another Wisconsin community. Future Mission of Mercy event locations will be determined after we can evaluate the success of our event in La Crosse.

The WDA thanks all the state legislators who have signed on early as co-sponsors of this legislation. We continue to encourage bi-partisan support for SB 97 as it moves through the legislative process and we ask for your support of this bill. Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to take any questions you might have.



KATHLEEN VINEHOUT

STATE SENATOR

Testimony in support of SB 97

Senate Committee on Committee on Health, Health Insurance, Privacy, Property Tax Relief, and Revenue
April 14, 2009

I thank Chairman Erpenbach and Committee members for this opportunity to testify in favor of Senate Bill 97 which I authored with Rep. Jennifer Shilling. This bill, if passed, would create a "no-fee" temporary permit for dental providers who want to volunteer at dental charity care events, and who meet all state dental licensing requirements, other than the state jurisprudence exam.

Rep. Shilling and I authored this legislation so out-of-state dental providers can generously volunteer their services here in Wisconsin as part of the Mission of Mercy event in La Crosse. This event will provide care to local residents who are unable to access dental care.

The first Mission of Mercy event was organized in 2000 by the Virginia Dental Association to provide free dental care to local residents who were not able to receive dental care. The success of the Mission of Mercy spurred other such events across Virginia and in many other states.

The Wisconsin Dental Association and WDA Foundation are planning the first Mission of Mercy event in June. This 2-day event will take place on June 26 and 27th with estimates of over 1,000 patients receiving dental treatment free of charge. The hope is that other communities will follow La Crosse in hosting Mission of Mercy events.

All dental services provided at the Mission of Mercy events are donated. The Wisconsin Dental Association has contacted providers from other states to participate. Unfortunately, current state law makes it difficult for them to volunteer their services. Wisconsin law requires out-of-state dental providers to pay the full licensing fee and go through an extensive licensure process in order to volunteer for the Mission of Mercy event in June.

Senate Bill 97 makes the changes necessary for dental providers, licensed in other states, to obtain a permit to practice for a period of not more than 10 days in a specified area. These providers must be qualified and satisfy the current criteria for obtaining a permanent Wisconsin license based on their licensure in another state.

Whether from Wisconsin or another state, I applaud all those willing to donate their time and services at the La Crosse Mission of Mercy event. Good oral health is essential to a persons' overall health. The lack of access to dental care is worst in rural areas, where families may have to travel hours to receive treatment or seek emergency care. The Mission of Mercy is not a solution to the problem of dental access but it is one way to deliver urgently needed dental care to those in need.

I respectfully request the committee recommend SB 97 for passage as quickly as possible so all willing dental providers can participate in the La Crosse Mission of Mercy.

Thank you for your consideration.

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April 10, 2009

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RE: Senate Bill 97, relating to authorizing temporary permits to practice dentistry or
dental hygiene without compensation

Dear Senator Erpenbach:

I am writing to convey to you an action taken by the Wisconsin Dentistry Examining Board at its March 4 meeting. After discussion of Senate Bill 97 (companion to Assembly Bill 103), the Board voted unanimously to go on record in support of LRB 1475/3. We believe it is important to encourage the provision of care without compensation that is delivered in such a way that the public health and safety are protected. The application fee and open book examination waivers included in LRB 1475/3 are in our view justified by the potential benefits of this legislation to the citizens of Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

Lori Barbeau, DDS
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Lori Barbeau, DDS
Chair
Wisconsin Dentistry Examining Board

c: Members of the Committee